

ONE IN 10 CHILDREN SUFFERS FROM A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER

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One in 10 American children and teens suffers from mental illness -- and just one in five of those receive treatment, according to U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D, Ph.D. In a 52-page wake-up call released in January, 2001 Satcher calls the situation a "public health crisis in mental health for children and adolescents."

"Growing numbers of children are suffering needlessly because their emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs are not being met by those very institutions, which were explicitly created to take care of them," writes Satcher in the report, which he calls "a blueprint for change."

Specifically, the Surgeon General wanted to promote public awareness of children's mental health issues, reduce the stigma of these diseases, and improve the ability to recognize symptoms of mental health in children. What is needed is to help families understand that these problems are real, that they often can be prevented, and that effective treatments are available.

Another big problem is the stigma associated with children's mental problems, according to Satcher. Refusing to deal with mental illness can lead to long-term consequences, including poor school performance, trouble on the job, and low self-esteem. The good news is that most of these problems are treatable. Mental Health Professionals can help all children and adolescents with psychiatric and psychological problems. Although it takes some skill to sort out which problem is the most pressing, a dozen visits or less to a therapist can make a "remarkable" difference. In fact treating children within a family context is so very important.

Among the most common mental health issues for kids are attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, anxiety disorders, conduct disorders, substance abuse, and eating disorders.

There is going to be a whole generation of children who are emotional cripples and may end up in jail because there were no treatment facilities available to them.